

Will Noel & Dot Porter
M-95: The Medieval Manuscript in the Twenty-First Century
23–28 July 2017

Narrative Course Evaluations

- 1) *Were the pre-course reading assignments useful? Did you do any additional preparation for your course? Are there any books or articles that you would like to see included in future years? Any that you might suggest removing?*
 1. There was a little misstep: the required reading list was not updated early on, so I did start reading articles that were interesting, but that weren't immediately {illegible}.
 2. The readings were not especially useful, but they were interesting.
 3. They were useful to get in the right mindset for the class, but not immediately applicable.
 4. The readings were interesting and varied, so yes, they were a good investment of time before the course began.
 5. It was disappointing to be told at the last minute (weekend before class began) that the posted advance reading list was no longer accurate.
 6. N/A
 7. They helped to orient me to the challenges of working with, finding, and downloading digital manuscripts.
 8. Yes, the readings were helpful since I have zero digital experience.
 9. I really liked the readings and thought they were great preparation. Maybe some overview of the state of the manuscripts digital humanities field could be added.
 10. Yes, especially for someone who is not technically inclined. They helped get my head in the space.
 11. Yes, the pre-course reading was helpful.
 12. I preferred and enjoyed assigned readings each night (which were provided in a course pack). Would be great to have them in advance electronically, or at least the first day's readings. Set up focused discussion of each day's work.

- 2) *What are your thoughts on the course workbook and/or other teaching materials distributed during class? Was the content appropriate and useful? Will it continue to be useful for you after the course?*
 1. All the materials were very useful in guiding us and inspiring us.
 2. It was very thorough and full of useful information I can keep in the future, especially the extensive lists of technical information.
 3. I would have liked more background info on codicology, though this is not to say the in-class instruction was lacking. I would like a handy reference to use as a starting point in future research.
 4. The workbook and handouts will be great *aides-mémoire* as well as instruction sets for future work. {private response}
 5. The course workbook was very helpful.
 6. I think the workbook will be very useful. I intend to spend a lot of time getting more practice with the different programs and learning what they can do.

7. Yes—they were clear and not too long.
8. Good.
9. Excellent, especially the step-by-step instructions for coding and visualizing.
10. Yes, definitely.
11. Workbook/hard copy was useful.
12. Yes! Very useful, which I will reread and be using in future teaching. Also, the course pack had great step-by-step instructions on how to use many digital tools.

3) *If you've taken previous RBS courses, how did this one compare?*

1. I really liked how this course included time to work on our final presentations during the course sessions.
2. It was more hands-on, practical, and demanding.
3. N/A
4. In some ways this doesn't feel like a "classic" RBS course (no SC visits, no large museums of old books), but it has one foot in that classic realm (we do handle manuscripts), and one in the digital realm, looking forward rather than back.
5. N/A
6. They were very different, but I loved them both. This was more open-ended than the last one, but I liked it because it gave us time for more hands-on practice.
7. N/A
8. Easier than Barbara Shailor's course, harder than Albert Derolez's.
9. I really liked certain aspects of this class, especially the content, but the pacing was more uneven than other classes I have taken. Sometimes we'd run over and cram too much in, other times it was too slow-paced.
10. N/A
11. N/A
12. They were extremely different, but both wonderful, with material to draw on for a long time to come.

4) *Which aspects of the course were most interesting and relevant for you as an individual? Did you walk away with any new insights, ideas, or project plans?*

1. Everything was really interesting and insightful to me as I'm just starting my journey in medieval manuscripts and digital humanities.
2. I was very happy to work with the collection, especially the Viscoll modeler, and I feel a lot more confident about my ability to study manuscripts in the future.
3. I have new ideas for the interface for my cultural heritage digital projects!
4. Several of the tools we learned to use—Mirador, Palladio, &c.—could be great for teaching demos, and I will consider how to leverage them for my research on manuscript history.
5. {no response}
6. I'm interested in using Scalar for an exhibit.
7. WN's knowledge of manuscripts really helped me to understand what I was seeing in my manuscript. DP's instructions/handouts/advice made what might be challenging accessible.
8. Giving presentations in class about a specific aspect of the manuscript.
9. YES! Mirador, Viscoll, the Needham Calculator, and I'm also obsessed with Palladio!

10. I think both sides of the course were useful, both the codicological and the digital. The hands-on experience helped my learning and retention.
11. Hands-on work with manuscripts and code, and seeing SCETI.
12. Yes! Possibilities for mining existing big data on manuscripts was thrilling. As a quantitative codicologist, it blew my mind.

5) *Did the instructors help you to acquire all the skills and information promised in the course description? Was anything left out or undeveloped? Did you learn what you had hoped to learn?*

1. The instructors were very engaging, helpful, and supportive. They adapted their individual comments to the participants' level really well.
2. Some of the digital aspects of the class were a little rushed. We did not have time to explore TEI properly, or the Open{illegible} software. However, the codicology part was very thorough.
3. The greatest value was in WN's introduction to codicology. I already had an idea of how to use all the digital tools, but WN's instruction allowed me to conceive of manuscript details as data points for future digital work.
4. This class is very much a practicum on codicology and digital scholarship tools. It is not deeply invested in discussing the theory and philosophy of digital work, which I think is a pressing issue but which may simply not fit into a five-day course.
5. {no response}
6. I wouldn't say I've mastered any of the digital humanities applications we learned, but now that I know what's out there, when the right project comes along, I'll know what to use.
7. It was fantastic.
8. Yes, but I need more practice.
9. I wish we could have spent a bit more time with Viscoll, and I wish we had been introduced to online instructional tools for building online mini-editions beside Scalar, which (I'm sorry) I LOATHED as a platform. Terribly buggy and inefficient!
10. Yes.
11. Yes, everything was great!
12. {no response}

6) *How do you plan to use the skills and knowledge acquired during your time here?*

1. I'll be making use of everything I learned while looking at the manuscripts for my dissertation.
2. I intend to follow up on a lot of the digital {illegible} when I have more time to focus on them, and to practice my codicology skills.
3. As a library employee, I plan to use every aspect of instruction to plan digital projects in the future, from the germ of an idea to the data delivered online as an end result.
4. I'd like to use Palladio to model manuscript locations in Europe, which could help me make an argument in my current work.
5. Scalar will be helpful for some of the presentations I am planning for the coming year.

6. I hope it will come in useful for both library work and my own research.
 7. I would like to try and develop more skills with digital manuscripts, and I hope to engage in more paleography.
 8. As a teacher, I'd use Scalar, but mostly I'll be hacking libraries. {The term "hacking" in this context refers to a workaround tool introduced during class. RBS does not encourage or condone illegal activity.—RBS staff}
 9. I intend to use Viscoll, Mirador, and Palladio in my own work, and with my students. Fantastic resources!
 10. Hopefully by using more digital manuscripts in my future research.
 11. Through graduate school and teaching later on.
 12. I was introduced to a whole new tool kit of digital tools which I will be using for future research and teaching. This will take time to explore and master, but to have a week of introduction to the world of digital data access and manipulation vastly expanded the methodological approach to my research—the possibilities are endless!
- 7) *Please briefly describe the intellectual level of the course. What sort of person might benefit the most from taking it?*
1. I believe that any sort of person curious of how manuscripts work, live, and survive would benefit from this course.
 2. Someone with a strong interest in the course subject who is not {illegible} proficient in any particular digital or codicological skill.
 3. A thrilling introduction to both codicology and digital humanities for someone with any humanistic background.
 4. It is rigorous and fast-paced, but does not make assumptions about how much people know. However, it would probably be very hard if a student came in with neither codicology nor coding experience. At least one is really necessary to keep up.
 5. I think this course is of most benefit to medievalists (to state what might be obvious).
 6. It's probably geared more towards researchers than librarians.
 7. It ranges from novice to expert. One can benefit in so many ways.
 8. I felt like some coding/computer knowledge before the class is necessary.
 9. Hmm...I felt a little too advanced for WN's portion of it; I just knew 95% of the discussion of paper and collation already, but that's just happenstance. I think this class should be listed before Barbara Shailor's manuscript seminar because she presupposes more knowledge of manuscripts than is presupposed here.
 10. Anyone could benefit.
 11. Any person and any level.
 12. Savvy digital humanists. Undergraduates to Ph.D.'s interested in using more digital tools for research and teaching.
- 8) *If applicable, what were the most original, powerful, or otherwise noteworthy educational moments in the course? Were there any "aha!" moments you'd like to share?*
1. The moment the instructors gave us a manuscript companion for the week on which we applied our new knowledge.

2. It was pretty continuously surprising, especially the revelations about how paper can be analyzed as a large-scale practice.
3. {no response}
4. When I realized that I understood how a line of XML was working instead of just copying from the instructions, I thought, “Maybe I *can* use this on my own.”
5. {no response}
6. I really liked the dynamic of having two instructors teaching two complementary skills. Paper comes in different flavors.
7. DP’s introduction of Mirador, and the hacking of Janus databases. {The term “hacking” in this context refers to a workaround tool introduced during class. RBS does not encourage or condone illegal activity.—RBS staff}
8. Using Viscoll was amazing.
9. WN should always teeter dangerously on a chair. For me it was Palladio in general and messing with the code in Mirador. And HACKING THE BEINECKE (mwahahahaha...). {The term “hacking” in this context refers to a workaround tool introduced during class. RBS does not encourage or condone illegal activity.—RBS staff}
10. Actually using the digital tools and having them work!
11. Both WN’s and DP’s lectures were amazing, and seeing the manuscripts was amazing.
12. {no response}

9) *How could the course have been improved?*

1. Maybe we could install some of the software beforehand like a list of required tools in addition to a list of required reading.
2. Maybe with less focus on the objects we were studying, since this would give more time for the digital component, or looking at several objects to break up the course more.
3. {no response}
4. A little more instruction in the use of Scalar, which was central to our work over the week, would save time and mistakes.
5. Having the technology loaded on our machines prior to the course would have been helpful.
6. {no response}
7. Have the programs sent out earlier so we can download them on our computers in advance.
8. Less air conditioning!
9. No Scalar, please! A bit more opportunity to practice the technical computer-y bits.
10. N/A
11. N/A
12. {no response}

10) *Do you feel that you got your money’s worth? Would you recommend the course to others?*

1. Yes! Yes!
2. Yes to both.

3. {no response}
4. Always!
5. Yes. Yes, I would.
6. Yes. Yes.
7. Yes, and yes.
8. Yes.
9. YES!
10. Yes, definitely.
11. Yes, totally worth it, and yes, highly recommend it.
12. Yes! Yes!

11) *If your course made any trips outside of the classroom, do you feel that they were time well spent?*

1. We went to SCETI!
2. We went to SCETI, which could have been a bigger part. I would have loved an opportunity to digitize books myself and use the photography software.
3. {no response}
4. We visited SCETI digital imaging lab on Monday. It was splendid to see “under the hood,” and I would have loved to see more!
5. {no response}
6. Yes.
7. Yes, we went to SCETI. That helped us to understand how the images are made.
8. Yes, SCETI was illuminating in understanding why digitization is so expensive.
9. Seeing SCETI was very cool!
10. It was interesting to see how the manuscripts were digitized.
11. Yes! More would have been nice, though!
12. Yes, I enjoyed seeing “where the sausage was made” in the SCETI digitization lab at Penn.

12) *If you attended any of our optional evening events, do you feel that they were a good use of your time? Were there any that were particularly important to your RBS experience? Any that you could have done without?*

1. N/A
2. The social gatherings at the Deck Tavern were great fun.
3. {no response}
4. I enjoyed the evening lecture very much—it was particularly relevant to our course material.
5. {no response}
6. {no response}
7. I felt the dinner was a nice way of meeting people.
8. The Laurie Allen lecture was superb.
9. I really enjoyed the evening lecture!
10. The opening dinner was a little expensive for what we got.
11. N/A
12. I enjoyed the Tuesday lecture but wish it had been more rare book/manuscript-related.

13) *Do you have any additional thoughts or advice for anyone considering taking this course in a future year?*

1. Free your calendar for the week!
2. Be prepared to do work or events in the evenings, so keep those open.
3. See Q7.
4. Plan to bring an up-to-date laptop and test wifi early, before class begins. You'll save time and aggravation!
5. {no response}
6. Bring a snuggie and a wool hat.
7. No.
8. Give yourself a lot of practice presenting in Scalar. I ran out of time because of the navigation.
9. Enjoy yourself—it's fantastic.
10. Be prepared to learn a lot.
11. Get to know your classmates, and instructors, too!
12. Enjoy!

14) *If you had to sum up your RBS experience with a single sentence, phrase, or haiku, what would you say?*

1. Awesome!
2. Most illuminating.
3. World's most thrilling nerd camp.
4. Janus-faced in the best of ways: one face looking to the past, one looking to the future.
5. {no response}
6. {no response}
7. Brilliant.
8. COWABUNGA!
9. INSCRUTABLE MANUSCRIPTS FTW.
10. {no response}
11. Encouraging and wonderful!
12. Mind-blowing!

Student Data

Number of respondents: 12 (of 12)

How did you arrange for time off to attend this course?

My institution/employer gave me professional leave time: 4 (33.33%)

My institution/employer did not give me professional leave; I used paid or vacation days: 2 (16.67%)

I am a student or non-year-round employee, with a more flexible summer schedule: 5 (41.67%)

My situation does not fit any of the options above: 1 (8.33%)

Who paid your RBS tuition costs?

- I paid 100% myself: 1 (8.33%)
- My institution/employer paid 100%: 1 (8.33%)
- I used a scholarship/fellowship to pay/waive 100%: 6 (50%)
- I used a scholarship/fellowship to pay/waive part; I paid the rest: 2 (16.67%)
- I exchanged goods or services in lieu of tuition: 1 (8.33%)
- My situation does not fit any of the options above: 1 (8.33%)

Who paid your RBS housing expenses?

- I paid 100% myself: 7 (58.33%)
- My institution/employer paid 100%: 1 (8.33%)
- I used a scholarship/fellowship to cover 100%: 1 (8.33%)
- I stayed with friends/family, or stayed in my own home and commuted: 3 (25%)

Who paid your RBS travel expenses?

- I paid 100% myself: 8 (66.67%)
- My institution/employer paid part; I paid the rest: 1 (8.33%)
- I used a scholarship/fellowship to cover 100%: 2 (16.67%)
- I live locally, and had no travel expenses: 1 (8.33%)

*Which of the following **best** describes your current occupation?*

Library disciplines:

- Cataloger/metadata librarian: 1 (8.33%)
- Library assistant/clerk: 1 (8.33%)
- Special collections librarian: 1 (8.33%)

Student working toward a/n:

- B.A./B.S.: 1 (8.33%)
- Ph.D./D.Phil: 3 (25%)

Professional educator:

- Assistant professor: 3 (25%)
- Other: 1 (8.33%)

Book trades:

- Book artist, artisan or printer: 1 (8.33%)